

CONGRESSMAN **JESSE L. JACKSON JR.**

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It's the Economy, Chicago

By Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr.

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When Bill Clinton ran for President in 1992, his top political advisor James Carville famously framed the key issues in the race by saying, "It's the economy, stupid."

In those days, as now, the country faced high unemployment, big deficits and slowed economic growth. President Clinton, with Rahm Emanuel at his side, put forth an economic plan that eventually passed Congress and helped create one of the strongest periods of peace-time economic growth in our country's history.

In today's Chicago where unemployment is rampant, the budget is \$650 million short, and the 5th floor of City Hall is up for grabs, the question for any Mayoral candidate has to be, "What's your economic plan?"

In my view, the best plan to bring jobs to our great city has its roots in a cornfield about 35 miles south of the Chicago Mayor's office, between University Park and Peotone.

That's where a third airport for the Chicago region can be built at any time - with only Governor Pat Quinn's signature needed for construction to begin. The plan that now sits on the Governor's desk would create 1,000 construction jobs soon and 15,000 permanent jobs when

the airport opens. Why has he not signed the plan into action? One simple answer: It's the economy, governor.

But more importantly, the new airport would open up another gateway to Chicago for tourists, business and cargo. It would broaden our economy in the same way that the opening of O'Hare did over 50 years ago. Today, all around O'Hare is the fruit that the airport has produced: corporate headquarters, warehouses, office parks, hotels, convention centers, restaurants. Commerce. Jobs. Economic growth.

Imagine a similar Chicago gateway from the south, up Interstates 57, 80 and 94, to Joliet and Chicago. High-speed rail could deliver tourists arriving on the low-cost carriers that are currently priced out of O'Hare. Cargo shippers from around the globe could have another route into the Midwest, augmenting Chicago's already fully-utilized rail and air transport capacity. New businesses, small and large, would spring up.

All of that translates into jobs and tax revenue for Illinois. It means a chance to pull us out of the economic doldrums and into a new future of growth.

The unique aspect of the plan that awaits Governor Quinn's signature is that it is fully financed with private sector investment. Not a dime of debt will be added to the bottom line of the City or the State. No federal money is required. Developers LCOR and SNC-Lavalin, who have built airports in New York and throughout Europe, Canada and South America, are ready to build and operate the airport right now with their own money.

Of course this concept is not new. I've been pushing it since I was elected in 1995. Nearly every leader in Chicago has endorsed the idea, including then-State Senator Barack Obama, who publicly stated his support in 2004. In fact, the only leader of any consequence who has opposed the idea is Mayor Daley. His successor - whoever that will be - will have the opportunity to see Chicago's third airport through to completion.

So in that context, anyone who has ambitions to be Mayor of Chicago has to come with a plan. Not just a plan to win the election – but a plan to govern, a plan to lead, a plan to create jobs and solidify and expand Chicago's economic potential.

If a candidate doesn't support the airport, then what is their counterproposal that would ultimately bring 250,000 new jobs that Illinois so badly needs?

I say bring on the contenders, bring on the debate, and bring on the ideas. But everyone in Chicago should remember that the mayoral race is all about the economy. That's the smart play.

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